

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
FLORENCE DIVISION

L.C. Brown, Jr.,)	C/A No. 4:12-784-MGL-TER
<i>aka</i> L.C. Brown,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	Report and Recommendation
vs.)	
)	
Mr. McCabe, Warden of Lieber C.I.,)	
)	
Defendant.)	
)	

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

The Plaintiff, L.C. Brown (“Plaintiff”), filed this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983¹ on March 20, 2012, alleging violations of his constitutional rights. Plaintiff is currently incarcerated at Lieber Correctional Institution. Defendants filed a motion for summary judgment on October 4, 2012, along with a memorandum and exhibits in support of said motion. (Document #39). Because Plaintiff is proceeding *pro se*, he was advised on or about October 5, 2012, pursuant to Roseboro v. Garrison, 528 F.2d 309 (4th Cir. 1975), that a failure to respond to the Defendants’ motion for summary judgment could result in the dismissal of his complaint. The Plaintiff filed a response on October 10, 2012.

¹All pretrial proceedings in this case were referred to the undersigned pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(A) and (B) and Local Rule 73.02(B)(2)(d), DSC. Because this is a dispositive motion, the report and recommendation is entered for review by the District Judge.

DISCUSSION

ARGUMENT OF PARTIES/ FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

The Plaintiff alleges that Defendants violated his constitutional rights. Plaintiff alleges a constitutional violation for being denied newspapers and photographs while confined in the SMU at Lieber Correctional Institution. The Defendants filed a motion for summary judgment asserting this action should be dismissed due to Plaintiff's failure to exhaust his administrative remedies before filing this action and qualified immunity.

STANDARD FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT

The federal court is charged with liberally construing the complaints filed by pro se litigants, to allow them to fully develop potentially meritorious cases. See Cruz v. Beto, 405 U.S. 319 (1972); Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519 (1972). The court's function, however, is not to decide issues of fact, but to decide whether there is an issue of fact to be tried. The requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleadings to allege facts which set forth a federal claim, Weller v. Dep't of Social Servs., 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990), nor can the court assume the existence of a genuine issue of material fact where none exists. If none can be shown, the motion should be granted. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c).

The moving party bears the burden of showing that summary judgment is proper. Summary judgment is proper if there is no genuine dispute of material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Fed.R.Civ.P. 56(a); Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322 (1986). Summary judgment is proper if the non-moving party fails to establish an essential element of any cause of action upon which the non-moving party has the burden of proof. Celotex, 477 U.S. 317.

Once the moving party has brought into question whether there is a genuine dispute for trial on a material element of the non-moving party's claims, the non-moving party bears the burden of coming forward with specific facts which show a genuine dispute for trial. Fed.R.Civ.P. 56(e); Matsushita Electrical Industrial Co., Ltd. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574 (1986). The non-moving party must come forward with enough evidence, beyond a mere scintilla, upon which the fact finder could reasonably find for it. Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 247-48 (1986). The facts and inferences to be drawn therefrom must be viewed in the light most favorable to the non-moving party. Shealy v. Winston, 929 F.2d 1009, 1011 (4th Cir. 1991). However, the non-moving party may not rely on beliefs, conjecture, speculation, or conclusory allegations to defeat a motion for summary judgment. Barber v. Hosp. Corp. of Am., 977 F.2d 874-75 (4th Cir. 1992). The evidence relied on must meet "the substantive evidentiary standard of proof that would apply at a trial on the merits." Mitchell v. Data General Corp., 12 F.3d 1310, 1316 (4th Cir. 1993).

To show that a genuine dispute of material fact exists, a party may not rest upon the mere allegations or denials of his pleadings. See Celotex, 477 U.S. at 324 (Rule 56(e) permits a proper summary judgment motion to be opposed by any of the kinds of evidentiary materials listed in Rule 56(c), except the mere pleadings themselves). Rather, the party must present evidence supporting his or her position through "depositions, answers to interrogatories, and admissions on file, together with ... affidavits, if any." Id. at 322; see also Cray Communications, Inc. v. Novatel Computer Systems, Inc., 33 F.3d 390 (4th Cir. 1994); Orsi v. Kickwood, 999 F.2d 86 (4th Cir. 1993); Local Rules 7.04, 7.05, D.S.C.

EXHAUSTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

Defendants have pleaded the affirmative defense of failure to comply with the PLRA's exhaustion requirement and have moved for summary judgment on that basis as well as on the merits of the allegations. Defendants assert that Plaintiff filed a single "Step 1" grievance concerning SMU policies. However, Defendants assert that while the grievance was dated February 8, 2012, it was not received by SCDC officials until March 28, 2012, two weeks after signing the complaint or eight days after it was filed in this court. Defendants assert that if the Step 1 grievance is denied, the inmate may appeal to the Division Director of Operations with a Step 2 grievance. If the Step 2 is denied, the inmate may appeal to the Administrative Law Court. (Defendants' memorandum, p. 12). Defendants attached a copy of the Step 1 grievance showing the date received as March 29, 2012. The grievance was dated by Plaintiff as February 8, 2012. Based on the date of the signing of the grievance or the date it was received, Plaintiff could not have exhausted his administrative remedies prior to filing this action.

The Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA") requires that a prisoner exhaust the available administrative remedies before filing a 1983 action concerning conditions of his confinement. 42 U.S.C. 1997e(a). In enacting the PLRA, Congress carved out an exception to the general rule that exhaustion of state remedies is not a prerequisite to filing a civil rights suit. The PLRA amended section 1997e so that it now provides, "No action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions under section 1983 of this title, or any other Federal law, by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted." *Id.* § 1997e(a). Accordingly, before Plaintiff may proceed with his claims in this Court, he must first exhaust his administrative remedies available through the grievance process within the SCDC. The

United States Supreme Court has held that “Congress has mandated exhaustion clearly enough, regardless of the relief offered through administrative procedures.” Booth v. Churner, 532 U.S. 731, 741 (2001); *see* Porter v. Nussle, 534 U.S. 516 (2002); Jones v. Smith, 266 F.3d 399 (6th Cir. 2001)(exhaustion required even though Plaintiff claimed futility); Larkin v. Galloway, 266 F.3d 718 (7th Cir. 2001)(exhaustion required even though Plaintiff claimed he was afraid); *see also* Claybrooks v. Newsome, 2001 WL 1089548 (4th Cir., September 18, 2001)(unpublished opinion)(applying Booth v. Churner to affirm district court’s denial of relief to Plaintiff). A failure to exhaust all levels of administrative review is not “proper exhaustion” and will bar actions filed by inmates under any federal law, including §1983. Woodford v. Ngo, 548 U.S. 81, 126 S.Ct. 2378, 2386 (2006).

Based on the evidence presented, it is recommended that Defendants’ motion for summary judgment (doc. #39) be granted for failure to exhaust administrative remedies. As it is recommended that the complaint be dismissed for failure to exhaust the administrative remedies, the merits will not be addressed.

PENDENT JURISDICTION

Assuming Plaintiff’s § 1983 claim is dismissed by this Court and Plaintiffs’ complaint somehow can be conceived to state an additional claim for relief under any state common law theory, the undersigned concludes that such claim(s), if any, ought to be dismissed as well for want of jurisdiction. Specifically, this Court can decline to continue the action as to the pendent claims if “the district court has dismissed all claims over which it has original jurisdiction.” 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c).

CONCLUSION

Based on the above reasoning, it is RECOMMENDED that this Defendant's motion for summary judgment (document #39) be GRANTED for failure to exhaust administrative remedies and this claim dismissed.

It is FURTHER RECOMMENDED that all outstanding motions be deemed moot.

Respectfully Submitted,

s/Thomas E. Rogers, III
Thomas E. Rogers, III
United States Magistrate Judge

April 12, 2013
Florence, South Carolina

The parties' attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.